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## SERMON XXIX.\*

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### THE INDISPENSABleness OF EARLY RELIGIOUS CULTURE TO THE PERMANENCY AND PROSPERITY OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS.

"REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ;

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain :

"In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

"And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low."—ECCLESIASTES 12 : 1-4.

THE man who, now or hereafter, rises to advocate the American Sunday-School Union, must at the outset humble himself out of all self-conceit of originality, and, as a gleaner after gleaners, saying things which have been already said, and perhaps better, only

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reiterate those familiar truths which his hearers will be sure to regard either as platitude or plagiarism.

On such an occasion we have no need of a text as involving a theme for elaborate exposition. The occasion presents its own subject. It was the wont of the great Preacher to use as texts God's unwritten oracles. A bird, a flower, a city on a hill, a fruitless fig-tree—these were subjects of his earnest discourse. And we would to-night imitate his example.

The American Sunday-School Union is a great thought of God flung before us for consideration. And upon it, as an unwritten revelation, we would discourse simply and humbly.

The portion of sacred Scripture I have read is, therefore, not for elaborate exposition, but as an inspired illustration of the grand principle which this association rests upon and develops. The design of the inspired penman in these verses, is to set forth the wisdom of early piety.

This he does by metaphorical representations of the disadvantages under which religious culture must be begun in the later periods of life.

The first figure is taken from the meteorology of the seasons in the land of Judea. There the weather in spring is in general bright and fair—seldom foul or cloudy. The day is genial with sunshine, the night lustrous with moon and stars. But the winter is a season of wild inclemency: thick clouds obscure the heavens, the rain pours heavily upon the cheerless and seething landscape, and though now and then there may be a momentary lull of the storm, a partial lifting of the shadows, a struggling sunburst, a fitful flash of stars, yet the promise disappoints us: the clouds return again, the storm rages. And such are the contrasts between youth and old age: the one is the spring-time, when the husbandman can work; the other, the winter, when he must repose. And the man who hath not remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, finds that with the buoyancy, the hope, the anticipation of his young life, have passed his advantages for religious culture, and that amid the gloom and despondency of age that culture is like winter husbandry, when the sun is darkened and the earth swept by storms.

The other figure is military: the language is descriptive of a beleaguered fortress, whose bravest defenders have been slain or are sadly weakened by watching and hunger; whose keepers tremble; whose menials, grinding corn for food, cease in despair; whose walls are in ruins; whose doors and windows are kept darkly closed, and the voices of music hushed through fearful despondency; whose trembling watchmen are startled, as at a foe-man's tread, by the very voice of the wild bird that builds its nest in the crumbling battlements, and which only awaits the final assault to be carried by storm and given up to destruction.

The interpretation of the figure is apparent. In youth the heart was as a stronghold nobly garrisoned: many a gentle and graceful instinct was there, as an angel-guard against evil, and the soul with comparative ease might have been sentinelled for virtue. But, as the man grew in years, passions strengthened within, and temptations pressed sorely without. And when age comes, the immortal fortress is a scene of despondency and terror: its bulwarks have been beaten down; its resources are exhausted; its strong men bow themselves; its hopes of ultimate deliverance have well-nigh perished, and the soul seems about to be given up to the power of the destroyer. Both figures teach the same truth: they set forth an earnest argument for religious culture; for the active toil of the spiritual husbandman when the sun shines in the genial spring-time; for the earnest watch and ward of the spiritual soldier before the walls of the fortress are battered, and the garrison slain under the fierce assault of the besieging foemen.

Now, this is just the truth which this Christian association rests upon and develops—The importance of early religious culture.

Let us consider it in some simple practical aspects, as it has to do with the Individual, the Nation, and the Church of Christ.

First, with the Individual. The Sunday-school system assumes and acts upon the truth that the best time for true moral culture, and for genuine religious conversion, is the season of early youth. That a principle lying confessedly at the foundation of all physical and intellectual development, so that a man's life takes its character and complexion from the training of childhood, should lie as well at the foundation of the true religious culture; and that children, instead of necessarily growing up in iniquity, may be, and should be, from the first, trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Let us not be misunderstood here. We have surely no sympathy with the notion that a child, however carefully trained, would, without the divine work of regeneration, grow up to be experimentally a Christian. Education is, as the word itself denotes, not an *infusion*, but an *education*; not a quality imparted, not a grace added, but a preëxistent principle brought forth, strengthened, developed. If the nature be depraved and unholy, no education can change it. As the innate ferocity of the lion's whelp will surely display itself in the monster's maturity, so the native carnality of the child's heart will have its development in actual sinfulness.

Men may philosophize as they will upon the possibility of educating children out of all that is evil and into all that is good. Nevertheless, the concurrent testimony of all time proves that, spite of all mere moral culture, every child of the human race has grown up a sinner. And this not because of any educational deficiencies, but for the simple reason that the child is of a race

constitutionally sinful. Train a young tiger as you would a lamb, amid green fields and sweet pastoral vales, led by day and folded at night by the loving care of a shepherd, and yet, when its sinew has waxed strong, if in your sport with that pet tiger his fang break the skin of your finger, and one drop of your blood fall on his hot tongue, then, with flashing eye and a wild roar, he will be upon you in his strength and rend you in pieces. The lamb will grow up a lamb; the lion, a lion. The physiological and psychological principles of species are, spite of all modification by culture, positive and permanent in their essential character.

And train up a child as you will—let angels rock its cradle, and bear it in their hands, lest its young feet stumble—nevertheless, just because it has a human nature, the *φύσις*, the *ψυχή*, the *πνεῦμα*, of the species, it will grow up to be a *man*, and not to be an *angel*, and will still need the miracle of regenerating grace, if it grow up a Christian.

And yet this philosophic truth affects not the play of the grand law we are considering. All sacred and profane biographies, all observation, all experience, alike set forth the fearfulness of the error that will leave childhood to grow up in wickedness with the hope and prayer that by and by divine grace will convert it.

Unquestionably does God desire the training of children from their cradle in ways of holiness; and as unquestionably there is a style of Christian culture, differing essentially from natural culture, termed "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," which God himself has instituted and so promised to bless to the conversion of its subjects. Be our theory of human depravity or of regeneration what it may, there is nothing in it which conflicts with this statement. If the Holy Ghost work immediately or directly upon the soul, then that energy will more probably be exerted before the conscience has been seared by iniquity, and the heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. All natural analogies lead us to expect this; and the fine metaphors of the text are a divine warrant for deducing from physical analogies the principles of God's operations in the economy of grace.

Or, if the Holy Spirit operates mediately, or through the instrumentality of truth, requiring, as conditional to regeneration, that truth be received and apprehended, still the same expectation remains; for the truth, whose comprehension is necessary to saving faith, being among the simplest of all moral truths, can be apprehended by the child as early as its educational life begins. The child old enough to understand natural obligations, can understand as well spiritual obligations. If it can grieve at a father's displeasure, and trust to a mother's love, and turn from childish disobedience to seek parental forgiveness, then it does understand all the philosophy of religion involved in repentance, and duty, and faith.

Indeed, we go further than this, and maintain that, even intel-



lectually received, or as forms of doctrine, the truths necessary to salvation are best apprehended in childhood ; that the intellectual opinions or judgments little children form of high theological mysteries are nearer to the realities, and so truer, than the metaphysical elaborations of the ambitious rabbis of theology. For example, I come to one of these men of academic erudition, and I ask, "What is God?" and he answers: "God is a self-existent, independent, absolute, infinite Spirit; without emotions, for emotion implies succession; without dwelling-place, for pure spirit has no relations to position; without, indeed, any resemblances or analogies by which we can figure or conceive of him." Now, this may be all very profound and philosophic, but alas! not very comforting.

God is what? An absolute and infinite Spirit! Ah me! that mysterious and awful word Spirit! No marvel that the disciples on Tiberias were troubled, as through the wild night came a wondrous form walking on the billows, and they thought it was "a spirit."

And so, when I look forth on the immensities of the universe, struggling to behold the invisible, and to compass the incomprehensible, and, catching glimpses, as it were, of an absolute and infinite Spirit, am told that it is God; then I startle and stand back in the wild night, as the mighty seas roar around me, as from the forth-going of some awful and incomprehensible phantom.

But, sick of this vain searching to find out God unto perfection, I turn from the school of the rabbi, and find me a little child, happy and trustful in its unambitious and earnest instincts. And I say again, "What is God?" And the child answers: "God is my heavenly Father."

And I know better now, for I know as much as I can know now. God the Spirit is my Father in heaven.

I go to the theologian and say, "Sir, what is heaven?" and he answers me with learned discourses about essences, and elements, and developments, and adaptations — with physical theories of another life, and intellectual and moral theories, till the heaven to which I had so fondly looked as an enrapturing reality, seems to me now, in its ethereal refinement, such an unfamiliar realm of unsubstantial spirituality, that I recoil from its glorious gates as if they opened only upon the spheres of immortal life weird and spectral. But I turn again to my child-teacher, and I ask: "What is heaven?" And the child answers, "Heaven is my home beyond the grave; heaven is my Father's house of many mansions;" and I know better now.

These are a child's answers. God is my heavenly Father! Heaven is my glorious home. And these answers are more in accordance with the words of Jesus, and so truer to the grand realities than all the profound deliverances of philosophy.

And we might affirm this same thing in regard to all the grand truths fundamental to salvation.

Nay, we might go much further, and show it to be not unlikely that the undeveloped mind of the child, in its metaphysical analysis, is, more than the mind matured under philosophic culture, a type of the life that peoples immortality.

We do not say that what we term the intellectual faculties as distinguished from the moral, being conditional to earthly life, do really, as apparently, decay in old age, falling off as only rudimental to immortality. We do not say this; for, so far as we can judge, our intellectual are indispensable to our moral powers, and must go with us to eternity. But this we do say, that our present intellectual exercises, subordinate to moral culture in toilsome search after knowledge, will not be needed in the after-life.

Newton has not ascended to glory to pursue there his old scientific researches, and to spell out, as on earth, with glasses and calculus, the laws and processes of creation, and to pace it, as it were, with slow intellectual footsteps, in laborious measurement of the universe. No! he has gone rather as a little child taught by a parent, to sit in adoring faith in the Divine presence, and learn directly from God of the immensities of creation and the laws that govern it.

The old giants of theology have not gone to their eternal home to search either the broad fields of nature or the brighter page of revelation, for the deep thoughts of God seen as through a glass darkly. No! they have gone, all of them, to sit as little children at the heavenly Father's feet, while he teaches them, by mysterious and direct communication, all wonderful knowledge, as the truth is in Jesus.

Ah me! that glorious oracle of God which declares that though in heaven there shall be no night, yet they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because God and the Lamb shall be the light thereof—that is, that, though intellectually we shall be in no darkness, but shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, yet our knowledge will result from none of those painful intellectual exercises—that faith, and not science, will be the law of the scholarship—the darkness being dispelled, not by finite instrumentality, but by the direct illumination of the Spirit of God.

There does seem in man's moral culture an analogy to vegetable development, the first and last conditions being alike—the seed, after progress through flower and fruit, finding its last development again in the seed-form, and so the emotional of childhood, after its earthly intellectual struggles, reaching its last and highest condition again in the emotional. That in our higher after-state, as in our childhood, the moral will carry it over the intellectual; that, so to speak, the soul itself will be rather a trustful, loving heart than a cold understanding; and that here Christ's words

have a literal significance, and even in the development of his intellectual faculties a man must become like a little child, or he can not enter the kingdom of God.

But, be all this as it may, sure I am that there is nothing in any true theory, either of man's depravity or regeneration, antagonistic to the thought that a child should not be left to grow up in sin with a view to future and adult conversion, but ought, from its very cradle, to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And this is the truth this Society recognizes and acts upon. Assuming the possibility of such heavenly training, it is urged on in its work by all the mightiest motives of time and eternity; by the solemn fact that so many die in childhood—so that in any given case the fearful likelihood is that, if not converted early, there will be no conversion; by the consideration that every hour's delay weakens the power of truth, by hardening the heart, and searing the conscience, strengthens the controlling power of sinful habits, adds to the evil, and takes from the good of the child's after-influence in his day and generation, shortens the earthly period of the soul's discipline and development in personal sanctification, diminishes positively the glories of immortality—wherein the recompense of reward, though altogether of grace, is yet according to our works—by motives, in a word, involving every consideration of the child's earthly and everlasting interests, and so urging to activity by the incalculable worth of the soul, and the grandeurs that make up eternity—by all such motives is it urged to bring children, at the first dawning of intellectual and moral life, to the feet of Christ in repentance and faith.

This is this Society's grand aim and effort. Acting on the patent laws of God's universe, it takes advantage of opportunities. It brings Gospel truth to bear upon the soul in its most impressible conditions. In the nursery, and by the cradle-pillow, it lifts the cross of the gracious Redeemer. It guides the lambs from moral wanderings into the green pastures and by the still waters where the heavenly Shepherd leads. It scatters its holy literature as leaves from the tree of life in all their pleasant places. It pours into the story-loving ear the matchless tales of Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Gethsemane, and Calvary, and links all the clustering and tender associations of childhood with the gracious truths of the oracles of God.

It acts, in a word, precisely on the principle of the text's metaphor. The years of early youth are the moral spring-time, and it plies its spiritual husbandry when the soil is soft and the sunshine genial, and delays not its work to the chill and stormy winter, when the light of the sun and the moon and the stars is darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. It has learned of Solomon to look upon the young heart as an immortal stronghold—if not

already watched and warded each with its angel, as, at least, more easily carried and garrisoned for heaven than in those later years when the man, given up to strong passions, hath no will over his own spirit, and is as a city that is broken down, without walls—when the virtuous principles within are sadly weakened, and into evil habits has gone all the earnest strength of manhood—so that the soul has its fitting emblem in a besieged fortress, exhausted of its resources and weakened in its defenses, whose melodies are hushed, whose windows are darkened, whose battlements are unwarded, whose strong men bow themselves, while around the mighty hosts of evil pitch their encampments, and plant their ordnance, and advance their banners, preparing to carry it by fierce assault and give it up hopelessly to the destroyer.

And, learning this from Solomon, it would persuade that young heart to open its door to the great Captain—"to remember the Creator in the days of youth, before the evil days come, when the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves."

Now, although we have just entered on the consideration of the importance of early religious culture as it has to do with the individual, yet we are pressed by the remainder of the subject, and go on to consider, as the second thing proposed—

The importance of this principle in its reference to our nation.

Beyond all controversy, the American Sunday-School Union has, alike in design and results, a grand work to do in our national education. And had we the limits, it were easy to show the vast importance of that work even in its lowest aspect of simple mental cultivation, and, apart from its higher religious bearings, on this ground only we might build a strong argument and urge a resistless plea in behalf of your Society.

There are, at this very moment, large and rapidly increasing portions of our land depending on your Sunday-School missionaries and literature for their first and simplest rudiments of learning. So far in many cases has our emigrant and pioneer population gone in ignorance, as to despise and decry education, as an enervating and over refinement; and if in the midst of them these matchless civil franchises do not prove suicidal—men casting into the ballot-box votes that they can not read, and which, so far as they go, decide the destinies of the nation—if all this do not happen, it will be only because these men have been taught the alphabet in your schools and learned to read from your publications.

But we have no limits for this argument: our theme leads us to consider only the religious training of the nation—to show how your Society looks upon America as yet in the years of its early youth, and labors to train its grand national life in this same nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In this labor, this Society acts upon the acknowledged truth



that practical religion is necessary to national prosperity. This is true universally. No form of government is either self-creative or self-conserving; none has ever existed without a powerful and pervading religious element. A nation of atheists is simply impossible; because some divine sanction is essential to the influence of law, and obedience to law is the condition of national life. And sowe find all the old pagan and philosophic builders of states resting their structures on the religious rock, and drawing from a theologic faith the strongest motives to political obedience. And if this be necessary in regard of national life slowly developed under armed despotism, how emphatically is it true of our life!

"Our nationality," says an eloquent orator,\* "is to an extraordinary degree not a growth, but a production. It had its origin in the will and the reason, and so depends upon the will and the reason for its preservation."

And even this is not the whole of the truth. For the will and the reason which constructed our nationality were a will and a reason purely and practically Christian. Its authors and finishers were more than statesmen: their faith and hope rested not on political science and sagacity. They looked for its preservation to no power that was in it of itself, but ever, and only, to a power descending to it from on high. A constitution of self-government created by selfish will may be dissolved again by that same selfish will, hopelessly and forever; and the will and reason which would conserve a self-government must be essentially Christian. Our national edifice rests on two grand gospel truths—the equality of human rights, and brotherly love equal to self-love—the first resulting in our sectional and state self-respect, the other in our system of grand federal compromises.

Take away from us, therefore, our pervading evangelical influences, and we fall in pieces at once and forever. And what then? I speak not of such disseverance as it looks to the eye of statesmanship and philanthropy, but as regarded by enlightened Christianity. What is this American nationality as seen from the platform whereon we meet to-night—the platform of a philanthropy broad, far-seeing, comprehensive, Christian? What, in our evangelical reckoning, is its worth and its mission—seeing in it, as we must, a divine purpose of wisdom and love, working not hurriedly with man's fiery and headlong progress, but in that great majestic patience, in those cycles of immense sweep, wherewith Jehovah ever achieves his deep counsels—working by and through those convulsions of human passion that have rocked the cradles and dug the graves of old empires—turning and overturning old systems for the establishment on their ruins of an everlasting kingdom whose monarch is God? Seeing this in our nationality—judging from the marvelous providences that have guarded and glo-

\* Rufus Choate.

rified it, the marvels of its birth, the marvels of its preservation—the opening here of a new continent for a new civilization—from its grand central position on the earth, from the strong hold it has on the world's sympathies, from the contrasted condition of all other nations, the deep darkness of heathendom, the clouds that overshadow, the volcanoes that underlie old European Christendom, threatening to render it presently all missionary ground, or, at least, to leave it, amid political convulsions, only enough of Christian strength to keep aflame the disturbed fires on its own holy altars—from the mighty influences and sources of influence which our land embodies, the power within us, and the power from on high that is descending upon us; from all this, I say, judging that our nationality is the development of a glorious providential thought running through all time, God raising us up, and conserving and rendering us mighty, with a purpose grander than all purposes of statesmanship, all dreams of philanthropy—grand with the greatness of divine mercy in the salvation of a race—just that we may stand forth, in the embodiment of all moral power, God's mighty instrumentality to work out the world's political and evangelical redemption, the grand mount flung up amid the waste of generations, whence the apocalyptic angel, with the everlasting gospel of peace to men and glory to God in the highest, is to spring to his last embassy and take flight over a world—thus seeing, thus judging, this nationality of ours seems worthy of preservation at all hazards, with all sacrifices, through all time—not merely for its own sake, not merely for ours, not merely for our children's sake and that of our children's children for a hundred generations—but preserved as well as a divine instrumentality for the salvation of a world, preserved for the love of Christ and for God's great glory.

And, thus reckoning its truth and ministry, this Society is working for its preservation, by underlaying its institutions with an adamant Christianity, training its young children for God and for glory, making the national character Christian in the only possible way—as the composite of individual Christian character.

And in this work you are acting on the philosophic law of the text—working with the nation, as with the individual, “in the days of its youth.” Here is the power and the promise of your labor. We are yet a young land. Amid the hoary and ancestral nationalities of the old continents, America, like a child of hopeful heart and undeveloped strength, keeps holiday in God's fields and rests in God's cradle. A giant babe, indeed, a child of mighty bone and mighty muscle—whose manhood will be as Samson's, rocking the pillars and bearing away the gates of the world's old despotisms—nevertheless, only a child yet, its heart open, its character unformed, to be trained for God hopefully under this great law of early culture.

Speaking of the preservation of American nationality, says the same great orator we have quoted: "In training American patriotism, you must begin with the infant. Let the first word he lisps be Washington; tell him the story of the flag as it glitters along the road; bid him listen to the old-fashioned music of the Union; lead him at eventide to the grave of his great-grandfather, the old soldier of the war; bid him, like Hannibal at nine years old, lay his hand upon the Constitution and swear reverently to observe it; lift him up to the height of American feeling; show him on the map the area to which America has extended herself, the climates that come into the number of her months, the silver paths of her trade wide as the world; tell him of her contributions to humanity and her protests for free government; keep with him the glad and solemn feasts of her appointment; bury her great names in his heart; contemplate, habitually, lovingly, intelligently, this grand abstraction, this vast reality of good, and you will do much to transform this sentiment of surpassing beauty into a national life that shall last while the sun and moon endure."

Now, this is all said eloquently and well—said as a great statesman, as a true and pure patriot: still, it reaches not to the depth of our argument—the true argument. It reached not, indeed, to the perfect application of the principle he had in hand as a statesman and a patriot: that principle was the necessity, in the preservation of a nation, of reproducing and perpetuating "the first principles, the ancient freedom, the masculine virtues, the plain wisdom, of the original." And surely it did not escape him that foremost among those first principles and masculine virtues on which our nationality was builded was practical Christianity.

It was not a love of man, but a love of God—not a love of country, but a love of Christ overmastering and crucifying all love of country, a personal consecration to the Gospel superior to all philanthropy, to all patriotism—that planted the germs of our national life on Plymouth Rock and Jamestown.

Our nationality had its origin not in mere "will and reason," but in a changed, Christianized, regenerated will and reason; and the will and reason that conserve it must remain regenerate and Christian. We have no faith in any philanthropy or patriotism, any sense of responsibility to country or to man, any lofty pride or profound sentiment of nationality, that takes not alike form and spirit from the Gospel of Christ.

Those ministries of popular education which, as educating thought, imparting knowledge, strengthening the judgment, evolving practical statesmanship, deepening the old memories of a common past, pouring prophetic glories over a dazzling and limitless future, producing or strengthening what the world calls civilization, philanthropy, love of country, popular liberty, loyalty to civil order as the old common law of the race, do, indeed, enlighten the nat-

ural will and reason—such ministries are good in their sphere and place: they beautify the fabric of our freedom with things fair as the Ionic pillar at the portal and graceful as the fairy arch that spans it. But then, alas! they lay no eternal rock at the foundation: they are effects, and not causes—rather decorative than constructive.

The Bible, with its free gospel upon the young popular mind, reproducing the old personal and social godliness, the strong, deep-rooted, living faith, which inspired our first state-builders—this is the adamant on which our nationality was founded, on which it must rest.

Without this, there is before us no dazzling and limitless future; without this, we are at sea upon stormy waters, and our confederative ties are as fretted cables when the bark drives towards breakers. Without this, we can readily believe that the social elements—powerful, positive, enthusiastic, extravagant—of our great Western population may be molded and hardened into the most monstrous developments.

That population may become radically and thoroughly Infidel. We are scarcely a braver or wiser race than were Frenchmen when the old forces of civilization combined in volcanic proportions, and the mountain of their nationality rocked, and all things pure and lovely and of good report went down in the fiery flood of political atheism.

It may become thoroughly and politically Papal. Talk not to me of Anglo-Saxon instincts and intellect. The elements with which superstition has to do are rather moral than mental. Man comes to his religion oftener through his passions than his intellect. If the old Hebrew race, fresh from the miracles of the Red Sea and the Nile, and overshadowed by the very Theophany of Sinai, could turn suddenly from that communion with a revealed God to worship an idol—if the old Latin race, with its literature and arts and poetry and eloquence, its grand ancestral glory, its imperial and historic past, amid the splendid monuments of its intellectual civilization, could entemple the Beast even on the banks of the Tiber—then who will dare confidently to predict that the American mind shall never bow down to Romanism?

It may become positively barbarian. Alas! for this boasted law of development and progress! What says the history of our race, written every where—in the death-dust of Egypt, on Etruscan marbles, in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, in the fossil literature of the grand Augustan world? What says it all but this? That without the Divine breath the fair body of civilization crumbles back to the dust again!

Verily, if in this holy hour the grim Turk rules in barbaric pomp on that golden hill of Zion where David worshiped and Solomon walked in his glory—if the wild Arab pitches his tent



on the shore of Galilee and the war-horse of the Moslem feeds in the manger of Bethlehem—who dare assure me that, in generations soon to come, the Goth and Vandal may not be rocked in the old Puritan cradle, and the owls of old Night brood and nestle in the eagle's own eyrie?

Sure I am, if there be a lesson written in fire and blood on all past history, it is that any depth of degradation is possible—nay, probable—to an irreligious progress—that civilization hath within it no essential principle of life, but depends for its very being on a power descending to it from on high.

Such, at least, is the belief which your Society professes and acts upon: that our national life depends upon evangelical influences; that the hopes and destiny of this republic can be realized only as a vital and vigorous Christianity is disseminated through the land; and, with such philosophic and practical faith, the American Sunday-School Union takes its place amid the mightiest instruments of our national prosperity. Indeed, over all the other great missionary associations that are seeking more thoroughly to evangelize the nation, yours has all the advantage which an earlier culture gives. You get the start of all adversaries. You are abroad in God's husbandry, with the good seed of the word, in the dewy morning, before the enemy is there with the tares.

With your Sabbath-school missionary watching the young child as it springs from the cradle, and casting your pure, free sanctified literature into the home-circles of the new society, we are warranted, in all principles of human nature and all historic experience, in predicting a future permanency and glory to our land which shall realize the grand destiny God has offered us in the regeneration of our species and the redemption of our world.

Yours is a practical wisdom profounder than the statesman's. Like him, indeed, in training the American nationality, you begin with the infant; but your training is more powerful. The first word on the young child's lip is not "Washington," but "JESUS CHRIST." You tell him not of our storied war-fields, but of Gethsemane and Calvary. You bid him listen, not to the music of the old colonial battles, but to the grand old psalms that the Pilgrim Christians sung in the sounding aisles of the wilderness. You overshadow him, not with the flag of our nation, but with the cross of our blessed gospel. You bind his young heart, like Hannibal's, not so much to his country as to his Creator. You lift him up to the height loftier than all American feeling—the height of true Christian feeling. You open his wondering eye to the relations, not merely political, but religious and evangelical which America sustains to all peoples and nations. You tell him of all God's past miracles—more marvelous than the old Hebrew signs and wonders—bringing forth and preserving and strengthening this great Christian nation as the instrument whereby the

race is to be emancipated and the world saved. And in this you have done much to realize this great idea of Christian faith, to develop this glorious purpose of Divine love, in a national life that shall be for man's good and God's glory while the sun and moon endure.

You are, at least, striving, while America is yet in the days of its youth, to train up its national life "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And in doing this you are doing a work whose importance no language can exaggerate. Ah me! this grand American nationality, as it seems to-day to a wisdom that is from above!

In its youth yet! Yes, indeed, a child yet—but a mighty child! Like the wonderful babe that slept in the rushes of the Nile, upon whose training for Jehovah depended such immense issues—all the miracles of Israel's deliverance, all the imperial splendors of the old Hebrew race, all the infinite glories of the Messianic redemption—in whose frail ark, so seemingly imperiled, lay cradled and incarnate one of God's loftiest plans and most magnificent purposes.

Such seems this young nation—a national life involving in itself God's grandest designs of redemption to our race and the world, and yet asleep on the wild tides of Time, as the child Moses in the Egyptian river—tossed by stormy waters, pressed upon, like the Nile's fierce monsters, by all forms and powers of evil. A life so nobly gifted, so fearfully imperiled, is our young nationality. And now, Christian influence, like the nursing mother's watch, can train it for Jehovah; now, on this true law of early culture, a nursing piety can sit by its young pillow and teach it to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven"—can lead its young feet into the ways of obedience—can train it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—till presently it shall stand up in its maturity, on this mount flung up for the enthronement of the man-child, the development of God's eternal purposes of mercy, crowned, glorified, a conqueror and more than a conqueror—the chains of a race shivered at its feet, the kingdoms of the world conquered lovingly for Jesus.

But leave this work undone for another quarter-century—this work of early culture your Society is doing; leave it undone upon the heart and conscience of this generation of youth; just allow the children that now are, to grow up in ungodliness, and then send, if you will, whole armies of earnest missionaries to labor with the unrighteous. Yet, alas! the babe will have sprung from its cradle into the strength of an infidel and unholy manhood, and, setting its mighty feet upon the Bible and its brazen face against the heavens, and trampling all precious things under foot, will perish in the flash of God's awful thunderbolts!

Now we have small limits left us to consider, as we proposed—

Lastly, the importance of the principle of the text in reference to the Church.

You have only to look carefully, and you will perceive a beneficent, evangelical influence in the reaction of this Sunday-School Union upon its own managers and patrons, overpaying a thousand-fold all its sacrifices and toils. There is in this work a self-culture and discipline finely preparing the Church for its millennial state.

While the American Church is essentially apostolic, yet formally it is a novelty—a new development of ecclesiastical life, under new influences of popular and civil freedom. It is yet emphatically “in the days of its youth,” and demands the peculiar culture of childhood. Its dangers are the peculiar dangers of youth, born of its intense egotism, its ambition, its warm and unrestrained impulses. Our very freedom in religion tends to foster rank growths of ecclesiastical licentiousness, bringing forth fruit in the bigoted arrogance of inquisitorial opinion. This boasted catholic toleration encourages an intense religious sectarianism, whose charities are measured by its creeds, and whose ethical sympathies are no broader than its theological agreements.

Let us not be misunderstood here as objecting to Christian sects. An honest love of denomination is unquestionably a good thing—altogether in harmony with God’s laws in creation. From the flowers of the field to the grand systems of the firmament, all classified orders of life are emblems of these Christian sects with their specific differences.

And the same law is patent in former religious dispensations. Under the common theocracy, the various tribes of Israel went forth, each with its own leader and bearing its own banner; and that generous emulation, between the champions of Judah and Reuben and Gad, as to which should plant a banner first on the walls of the conquered cities of Canaan, was the secret of the strength and glory of the old Hebrew name. And we would emulate this spirit in our militant Christianity. We give thanks to God that, for the exercise of all our constitutionally different tastes and judgments in minor things, there is space and sphere in our American Zion; and we would no more change all these healthful and happy Christian sects into one compelled composite of denomination, than we would transform all our sweet homes, with their separate boards and firesides, into one broad pantisocracy of socialism, or consolidate all the separate and shining worlds of astronomy into the huge bulk of one starless continent.

A warm, genial, generous love of denomination is a goodly and graceful thing: nevertheless, there is a thing called sectarianism, which is of another shape and another spirit. Zeal for forms of faith, consistency, Christian fidelity, some men call it. Arrogance, folly, intolerance, treason to God and man, self-willed, persecuting, inquisitorial bigotry, we call it—born of little minds, of shriveled

hearts, of benighted consciences, confounding large things with small things, false issues with real issues, the contour of the shadow with the composite of the substance, the plumes of the soldiery with the spoils of conquest, the music of the march with the shock of the battle—a spirit loving a church more than Christ, inspiring the strife of armed men for the seamless robe of Jesus—the bickering of rabbi and priest about mint and anise and cummin while the heavenly fire pales on God's golden altars. And this, like all foul growths in a virgin soil, is likely to thrive in the heart of the young Church under our grand catholic liberty.

Now, it is just in its powerful tendency to repress this spirit that your association reacts so beneficially on the Church itself. This type of sectarianism withers under the prevailing influence of a society which gathers all Christian sects in a common effort to give a common gospel to a common world.

Here is the philosophy and the foundation of true Christian union; not that false show of union that parades its platform professions of brotherhood only as a pleasant interlude to fierce, pulpit uncharitableness,—the chivalrous salute of the knights of the old tourney ere they lay lance in rest and rush into battle—the sham courtesy of resolutions of Christian union exchanged on our outside platforms at stopping-places of the great Church-road, while in each separate ecclesiastical car there is blazoned the placard that no traveler is allowed to stand on the platform when the train is moving—not this transparent hypocrisy, which may self-deceive a preacher, but which the people understand and despise as shallowness and a shadow—but that true catholic union, not indeed in form, but in spirit, in purpose, in labor, in affection, in heart—that old Pauline brotherly kindness, which, respecting all opinions, loves meanwhile all men, subordinating all minor differences to the reach and play of a glorious common effort, believing, with Christ, that Satan's house is not divided, and so bidding every man God-speed who is casting out a devil; this, I say, is the noble Christian brotherhood in a great work which your Society fosters. It brings the whole ecclesiastical life under the power of the great law of compromises—a law under which, by blending of things specifically different into lovely combinations, God works out in nature and in man his grandest phenomena—a law producing all fair things in nature, from the lowest union of simple elements into composites of beauty and power—the atmosphere, the ocean, the rocky mountain, the huge bulk of earth—up to the complex harmony of composites—the blending of mountain and river and sweet pastoral vale into one fair landscape—the mingling, in the flower's leaf, the rainbow's arch, the sunset heavens, of various and distinct colors in one aspect of beauty—the concord of musical sounds of different compass and power into one grand and rich harmony—the adjustment of forces dis-



ting, seemingly antagonistic, into the vast resultant motions of the astronomy of the universe; a law of compromises, working as well morally all great things in MAN, the reciprocal softening of all mental and moral qualities in the true composite of character—the concession of abstract individual rights and interests for the sake of the complex civil life of states—seen in the practical life of all men great in their generation—not great in one monstrous virtue, but in the symmetry of all virtues—seen in the noblest forms of national life, made up of separate interests, sprung from different dialects and conditions and states, all mutually emulous, mayhap envious, yet, in the inspiration of a great commonwealth, forgetting all meaner interests in a broader national interest wherever a hostile foot crosses the common border or the common banner of their battles is borne high in air; yea, a law working God's highest harmonies even in the spiritual and immortal—that union of the celestial hierarchy, throne and dominion, and principality and power, and angel and archangel, ascending and descending, in Bethel's old vision, standing distinct, yet together in their high orders, around the one throne, blending all their myriad voices in the one mighty hallelujah unto God and the Lamb.

This great law of compromises for the sake of union—this holding in abeyance all personal preferences or prejudices in regard of smaller things for the sake of one controlling master-interest—this great national and Christian law—your Society recognizes and acts upon, and so works out the finest form of a grand composite Christianity.

Its tendency to this end is two-fold—objective and subjective.

It does this objectively. It is conditional to the power—yea, to the very existence—of its missionary life, that the children who come under its influence should be so trained in a broad catholic spirit that when they assume visible church-membership they will love one another. I do not say that these children will grow up without denominational preferences; for I know that, under any culture, there will be developed those specific differences, intellectual, emotional, æsthetical, which lie at the foundation of ecclesiastical canons and creeds; but I do say that, let them gather into sects as they may, they will never grovel in sectarianism. Studying together the same sweet lessons of heavenly truth, blending their voices in the same sweet songs of Zion, joining in the same prayer, disciplined to the same gospel, trusting in the same Saviour, walking towards the same bright home in heaven, as they go forth from your missionary schools a broad catholic love will pervade their Christianity; and as easy were it to shrivel back into an acorn the giant oak of the mountains, as to force back their charity, in its free and fair strength, to the miserable shells of a Pharisaic and priestly sectarianism.

Meanwhile, subjectively, upon the managers and patrons laboring

together in this great work, the reaction of this practical evangelical alliance will be to fill every heart with a catholic spirit, around which the iron chains of bigotry will fall off as smoking flax from a Samson.

Men that labor together in a common cause so vast, so glorious, will love one another. As well might you get noble-hearted mariners into a dispute about ship-carpentry and sea-water while lowering the life-boat to save drowning men, or fellow-soldiers into an envious quarrel about plumes and banners while storming side by side some Sebastopol or breasting shoulder to shoulder the fierce tides of battle, as to excite Christian men, united in a work like this, into pitiful strife about non-essentials.

Here comes in the play of the great law of compromises, subordinating all things smaller, all things meaner, to the sublimities of a mighty end and a common master-purpose.

Men firmly disciplined to their peculiar creeds, yet, in the inspiration of an immortal brotherhood, coming up from the miasmatic mists of the old Meribahs of metaphysical strife—the valleys of vision filled with the dry bones of ancestral and historic controversies—to stand together on the serene mountain-top, where the radiant sun shines and the dews of heaven lie fair and soft—some common Pisgah overlooking Canaan, some common Tabor with its transfigured Christ.

Sects, distinct, conservative, strong in the love of their own faith and forms, yet, for man's good and God's glory, working together, as the stars work, each in its own sphere and with its own periodic motion, and time, and velocity, and temperature, and types and tribes of life, and peculiar internal economy, and external glory—yet all moving together in the grand harmony of system and cluster and universe, lustrous each as a distinct gem, yet all blazing together in the regalia of the one only living and true God!

Such a broad catholic Christianity, I say, does this American Sunday-School Union contemplate and develop; and simply in doing this it proves itself worthy of all the encouragement of our labors and prayers.

This is just the training the young American Church needs as it rises from its cradle to the tasks and trials of manhood.

If, as it seems to us, this American nationality is to be God's peculiar instrument in the world's political and evangelical redemption, then our American Church, as the great fountain of the universal Christianity that is to be, must manifest within itself the type and the stature of true millennial piety; and what it wants is not mere wealth, or zeal, or power, but simply mere love, a baptism from on high, that shall disciple us all visibly unto the same Master, with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

In the Church's bigoted sectarianism is found the strong obsta-

cle to the present advent of the latter-day glory. That mighty angel of the Apocalypse will not bear unto the nations a divided gospel! God's Spirit will not enstamp our dissentious and discordant Christlanity upon the millennial Church. The distinct tribes must go up, not as jealous and rival bands, but as the one Israel of God, with one banner over them, and that banner love, if they would conquer the Canaanite.

There must be, from root to spray, a nobler development of the inner life of love, ere the heavenly tree shoot its branches and shower its fruit to the ends of the earth for the healing of the nations.

This was just the burden of Christ's pleading prayer, uttered in his hour of sore travail, as he entered the shadow to tread the wine-press alone, for the Church he was to purchase with his own blood—not that it might have wealth, or learning, or philosophy, to cope with the old heathenism—but “That they all might be one, that the world might believe.” And the world will not believe otherwise. For it is a shrewd, thoughtful, logical, common-sense world, to say the least of it; and you can not persuade it that this divided Christianity, this bigotry of sect and creed, this self-seeking, intolerant, uncharitable exclusiveness, is a spirit from heaven—that men pausing at the very passes of the Jordan to intone a shibboleth are the army of the living God marching on the high emprise of redemption to the victory of the world.

“That they all may be one—that they all may be one,” not indeed, in form, but in spirit, in purpose, in labor, in affection, in heart! This was the Saviour's prayer. And of this prayer is this Union working out, with all its increasing power, the practical answer. It is training the young American Church into the higher life of love, according to our text's law of hopeful culture—sowing the seed of love in the sunny spring-time, when the skies are genial—planting the sentinels of love in the fortress before the windows are darkened, and the doors shut in the street, and the music of affections hushed under the reigning power of sectarianism.

Thanks be unto God, I see, in associations like this, blossoms whose fruits shall be the purple clusters of the latter-day Christianity. I perceive here a ministry that is even now laying broad and deep foundations for the millennial Church—a Church whose type, as seen in apocalyptic vision, was not twelve separate strongholds, one for each tribe of Israel, united indeed by some loose tie, like an old feudal confederacy, but the while each frowning darkly on the other, with its gloomy ecclesiastical battlements, and its portal opening only to the watchword of its own shibboleth—oh! not this!—but whose type was rather one glorious city, its walls garnished indeed not altogether with one but with twelve manner of precious stones, having not indeed one mighty gate for the

whole host, but twelve separate gates, with twelve angels, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and yet all these twelve gates opening to the same city, through which went the sealed of each tribe, the hundred and forty and four thousand, all to stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, joining their voices in the same new song of salvation, and casting their crowns together before the one throne of their God.

But we have exhausted our limits, and hasten to conclude. Most imperfectly, and with small and hasty preparation, have we considered the truth which our text teaches and this Society acts upon: the importance of early religious culture to the INDIVIDUAL, the NATION, and the CHURCH OF GOD!—and we may not, and need not, linger with a closing appeal. Instinct with such a purpose, working out such issues, the American Sunday-School Union needs not our poor advocacy. It has already taken its place among the very foremost of the Church's evangelical instrumentalities; and as a great, a simple, a magnificent system of religious education, embodying the mightiest moral influences and wielding them all in finest adjustment to the known laws of our nature, it comes with God's manifest credentials, an angel's beauty and an angel's power.

It comes with a divine call unto all men—philanthropists, who love their race, patriots, who love their country, Christians, who love their church, men who see in every cradled infant an immortal spirit upspringing to eternity; who see in this nation God's last and grandest instrumentality for the race's civil and religious disenthralment; who see in these Christian denominations one Church of the living God, advancing the same banner of love to the conquest of a world for the ascended Redeemer—to men of wealth and talents and station—to men weaker and humbler, who yet love and would labor for the creature and the Creator—men with the ten talents and men with the one—spirits mighty to lead or earnest to follow—to one and all it comes, as a call of the living God, uttered by the cry of every infant which a mother's love watches, uttered by the wild surges of our emigrant life rolling towards the Western ocean, uttered by the dying cry of great nations as they stretch their drowning hands for aid from earth's islands and continents—a call eloquent with all tender motives, all blessed memories, all glorious hopes, the memories of our Saviour's wondrous love, when he sought for and saved us, the hopes of casting lustrous crowns at his feet when we shall see him as he is and be with him and like him—with a call so tender, so irresistible, so divine, does it come to us, bidding us go forth together, with one heart, one spirit, one grand catholic purpose, one constraining, overmastering, all-transforming love for our common Redeemer, to train God's great infant for its immortal manhood, and rock with an angel's ministry the cradle of God's world.



## SERMON XXX.

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"AND I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."—REV. 14: 13.

THIS is a part of that wonderful vision which John saw in the isle of Patmos. The prophetic portions of this vision, in their sublime foreshadowings of the future, are difficult of interpretation. But this passage contains most consolatory declarations concerning the condition and blessedness of the righteous beyond the grave, and the power and perpetuity of their influence after they cease from their labors on the earth.

It contains a direct and effective contradiction of the doctrine of annihilation, as well as the scarcely less revolting dogma of the soul's unconsciousness from death to the resurrection.

It rebukes the timid and unbelieving, and should greatly assuage the grief of those who otherwise might unduly mourn the departure of their Christian friends. The Bible is the book of consolations. Without it and the divine religion which it reveals, how could we witness the premature decay, and unexpected departure from life, of those whom we most ardently love? how could we see the grave close over those who have been so pleasant and useful to us in life, did we not hear the voice from this blessed volume: "I am the resurrection and the life; though a man were dead, yet shall he live again."

In view of our own approach to death, what must be our consternation and dismay, did we not hear from the voice of inspiration: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

I. The prominent doctrine of the text is, that those who die in the Lord are immediately happy.

This doctrine accords with reason, and is fully corroborated by other passages in the word of God. It would seem unreasonable that a being, endowed with high rational powers—a being long struggling for a higher development, and urging his way up the scale of moral excellence; finding, too, his highest happiness here in contemplating the character and government of God—in the actual service and worship of Jehovah, should be otherwise than happy in the world of spirits. Nor is it reasonable to suppose, as

some do, that the spirits of departed saints shall slumber, like their crumbling dust, till the resurrection morn. How unlike the other dispensations of the Father of spirits to his children, would it be to silence, for ages, the songs of his people, to place in the sleep of the grave the soul which has been so long sanctified by his spirit, and so long engaged in acts of service and devotion. But we are not left to the discernments of reason, or to the force of analogy on this subject. The doctrine is clearly taught by other passages of Scripture. In the prayer of our Saviour for his disciples, he says: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

In the vision of heaven which John saw, he says: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest; and he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "Righteousness tendeth to life." "In the way of righteousness is life." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

The Apostle, in addressing the Philippians, says: "I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

On what ground could the inspired Apostle have made these strong assertions, except that he had a full assurance that the righteous shall, immediately after death, be in the presence of their Saviour, and perfectly happy in the society of the redeemed?

These are but a few examples of the passages of God's word in which this doctrine is directly inculcated. The whole tenor of the Scriptures confirms it. The patriarchs and prophets are spoken of as in the full fruition of heaven. The Saviour himself said to the believing thief upon the cross: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

II. We come now to the interesting inquiry, what is the import of the expression in our text, "the dead who die in the Lord."

1. "To die in the Lord" implies a living faith—that faith by which the soul is united to Christ—by which the merits of his atoning blood are applied to the sinner in his regeneration, and for

his redemption from the curse of the law, and his sanctification through the Spirit, whereby he obtains deliverance from the power and dominion of sin. That faith which works by love, and insures supreme attachment to the principles and employments of God's eternal kingdom. Of such, when they die, the Apostle saith: "Blessed are they, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

III. This leads us to inquire, What is the nature of the rest and blessedness upon which the righteous enter at death?

1. They rest from labor—not from employment—the inhabitants of heaven are represented as in the highest state of joyous, blissful activity, saying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and art to come;" and when this sublime ascription ascends from the living beings, "the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sits upon the throne and worship him that liveth forever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy honor they are and were created." No, brethren, the rest of the righteous is not a sluggish and inactive rest.

But they rest from that labor, which implies toil, and induces fatigue. Such is the change, as the freed spirit leaves its mortal coil, that it becomes capable of continued and most delightful exalted service and homage, without labor or fatigue. On earth, God's service is often attended with much wearisome labor. Witness the journeyings, the toils, the sufferings, the persecutions, the martyrdoms of the Apostles and early Christians. Witness the privations, hardships, exhausting labors of missionaries in modern times. Even the ordinary Christian efforts for good, attended with the daily struggles against corruption within, and the myriad temptations without, often fill the soul with wearisomeness and pain, and induce the earnest desire to depart and be with Christ. This is a part of God's system of means. He allows his people on earth to toil, to languish, to suffer, that they may be weaned from the world, and be prepared for the rest in reserve for them in heaven.

2. There, too, they shall be free from care and anxiety. Every doubt, every perplexity, shall be left behind.

"They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And there shall be

no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

3. A further element in the blessedness of the righteous is freedom from sin. In the present state, although the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, the Christian is but partially sanctified, so that even the Apostle cried out: "Who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" But there, "nothing shall enter that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." The known experience of the most eminent Christians shows us that their greatest grief has been remaining sin. Paul informs us that "the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In heaven the spirits of just men made perfect are represented as singing a "new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," for they are free from sin.

4. Another source of blessedness to those who die in the Lord is, the full fruition of God and his spiritual kingdom. The true Christian derives his highest happiness on earth from the contemplation of God's character as exhibited in his works, in his providence, and in the great plan of redemption.

But here, "he sees as through a glass, darkly;" there shall he see face to face. Here he gains some glimpses of his Father's glory, some foretastes of heavenly bliss; but there shall he gaze with ineffable delight upon the full glories of the Lamb, amidst his Father's throne. He shall realize in every element of his spiritual being that in his presence is fullness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

IV. We come now, in the fourth place, to consider the fact announced in the text, "and their works do follow them." The Christian's works of faith, of love, of submission, of obedience, are the developments of the noble character which God approves, and which the Christian carries with him to the eternal world. The rewards of these works shall follow him, in all their divine results, in his endless being of blessedness in heaven.

But may there not be another sense in which the works of those who die in the Lord follow them? Good men in the midst of their noblest service for God on earth, often suddenly pass away; their sun is not permitted to descend to its rich and mellow setting; it is extinguished at high noon! Whether they pass soon or late to their heavenly blessedness, their influence for good lives after them. It lives in the chain of causes put in operation, reach-



ing onward far into the mysterious future. It lives in a holy life and example remembered. A living example of piety is often more valuable than the most powerful logic, the most persuasive eloquence. Such an example, remembered and cherished, often lives with increased power over the family circle, the church, the whole community in which he moved. Death sheds a kind of sanctity over every virtue. Affection fondly lingers around the excellences of our departed friends, while she gladly throws the pall of oblivion over their faults. A thoughtless youth is tempted to some unworthy or sinful act; faithful memory brings before his mind the holy example of a departed father; he resists the temptation, emulates the virtues of his parent, and receives a moral impulse which shall last forever.

His influence lives, too, in the instructions he has given and the maxims of wisdom inculcated. How especially true is this of the parent, and more especially of the minister of the Gospel and the public teacher! These instructions have been given, these maxims inculcated, with the power of affection, and the sanction of authority; they will live, they will follow him into eternity, in hearts subdued, in souls sanctified for the Redeemer's service, and that shall, together with him, magnify the grace of God forever. This influence becomes more obvious and wide-spread if these instructions assume the form of the printed page, to be scattered as leaves from the tree of life, and to make their impression upon myriads of minds in after-ages.

The works of the Christian often follow him in the influence of his acts of charity and public service. God may have made him steward over much earthly treasure. By his acts of beneficence and kindness to the unfortunate and distressed, accompanied by his prayers and Christian admonitions, he may not only have bound up the broken-hearted, and caused joy and gladness to vibrate through many a wretched soul, but he has also planted an influence in favor of the religion he professes, which shall result in the glory of God, and may live in a thousand souls after he has gone to his final reward. Or, perhaps, he combines his influence and means with others, and lays the foundation of some public institution of learning or charity, which God owns and blesses. He shall pass away, but his influence lives, and goes on accumulating and multiplying its results in all coming time, till it shall be felt round the globe!

In illustration of the views here presented, many examples might be referred to as found in the biographies of good men, and recorded in the history of the Church. But of those whose usefulness has been eminent in the Church, from personal considerations I take the example of the late Rev. Elihu W. Baldwin, D.D., first President of Wabash College.\* He accomplished two great and

\* The author of this discourse was the personal friend and the fellow-laborer in the

especially good works in his short but highly useful life—the planting of a city church, and the establishing of a College in the Mississippi Valley.

The incidents of his early life present nothing remarkable or striking. Dedicated to God and educated for his service, by his pious parents of Durham, New-York, at the age of eighteen he became a member of Yale College, and under the preaching of its devoted and venerated President, Dr. Dwight, he was converted, and through his college course honored the Christian profession. Having pursued his theological studies at Andover, he devoted himself to the work of Domestic Missions at the West, and placed himself under the direction of the Evangelical Missionary Society. By them, however, he was urged to occupy, what was then missionary ground in the city of New-York. The object was to plant a church in a new and uncultivated portion of the city.

To this work he devoted himself with an ardent and untiring zeal. His labors were most abundant, arduous, self-denying, and successful.

The result was the establishment of the Seventh Presbyterian Church. In this God abundantly blessed his labors, and large numbers were effectually trained for his kingdom on earth and in heaven.

In addition to preaching three times on the Sabbath, and several times during the week, and the pastoral labor requisite for a very large church, he was a member of the executive committees of several of the great benevolent societies, which threw upon him much responsible labor of a more general and public interest. In the discharge of all these duties he was prompt, energetic, cheerful. In these committees his counsels were always highly valued, and one of the deepest regrets expressed on his leaving the city, was at his withdrawal from these great trusts.

Having occupied this important field for seventeen years, at which time he had six hundred members in his church, and one thousand children in his Sabbath-schools, Mr. Baldwin was invited to the presidency of Wabash College, in 1834, then just chartered.

With the advice of a large circle of his ministerial friends in New-York, he resigned the charge of his flourishing church, to stand at the head of this new enterprise at the West. Sustained by the liberal patronage of wise and good men, he devoted himself with great energy to the arduous labor of establishing a college in a new country. He threw the whole power of his noble mind and heart into the cause of Christian education at the West.

The accumulated wisdom of seventeen years of successful ministerial and pastoral labor in a great city, gave shape and direction

struggles and early history of this very useful Institution, and this sermon may be regarded, in some aspects, as a tribute of personal affection.—EDITOR NAT. PREACHER.

to his purposes and efforts for the College. He had the happiness of seeing the institution rise rapidly under his care, and many of the students under his ministrations were converted to God.

Nor were his labors confined to the College alone. He preached with great power in all the principal cities and towns of Indiana, and did much to awaken the public mind to the great cause of popular and collegiate education.

In all his decisions, he chose the path of self-denial. The brief outline of results shows that in this he was most abundantly blest. Yet not without much trial of his faith. In the midst of his efforts in connection with the church in New-York, in the midst of a powerful revival, the church edifice was burnt, and before the principal building for Wabash College was quite completed, it was lost by fire. In both these calamities he manifested a great firmness of character, saying: "It is to try our faith: we must look up."

In each case the building was replaced in an incredibly short time, and chiefly through his untiring energy and zeal.

But God's ways are a mighty deep—to us inscrutable. At the end of five years he died. The piety which carried him through so much self-denial and labor, enabled him to die in the triumphs of faith. He rests from his labors and his works follow him.

The church he planted and for so many years watered, has flourished onward, and has sent out its colonies to bless the city.\*

The College has had a vigorous growth of a quarter of a century. It now stands one of the prominent and most useful institutions at the West. In its whole existence of twenty-five years, it has shared largely the divine influences. It was blest with nine revivals of religion in thirteen years. Of the eighteen hundred young men who have enjoyed its advantages, many have gone forth as teachers.

Of the regular graduates of the College, more than fifty have become ministers of the Gospel, most of whom labor in the Mississippi Valley. They have planted thirty new churches. Under their ministry have occurred more than forty revivals of religion, and nearly a thousand hopeful conversions; two of these ministers are missionaries in California, one in Oregon, one in Western Africa, one in Turkey, one in Southern India, one in Micronesia. Five of the graduates are professors in colleges in the West and South, and one the successful pastor of the American Presbyterian Church in Montreal.

If we add to this the general influence of the College upon the cause of truth and Christian education in that valley of teeming millions, and its probable far-reaching influence in the future, who

\* The Rev. Dr. Hatfield, now the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, was the immediate successor of Dr. Baldwin in the pastorate of this fruitful church, and has continued in it till within about two years.—EDITOR NAT. PREACHER.

shall say that Baldwin's works do not follow him? Yea, they will follow him into eternity. Who, who, would not live and die in the Lord, that when they rest from their labors their works may thus richly follow them!

This brief view of individual services shows what may be done in one short life. And especially does it illustrate the value of well-directed effort in the forming state of society, in laying the foundations for many generations. The timely efforts put forth by our early missionaries at the West, to plant permanent institutions of learning, and the coöperation of the churches in the East, through the College Society, and otherwise, will stand forth, in a cordon of these strongworks of Christian power, which shall largely bless the country and the world.

And these views of our subject should silence every murmur at the early, and to our view, premature death of God's servants. In the high noon of life, and when their labors seem most needed, good men bow themselves to die. Cornelius, and Evarts, and Wisner, and Baldwin were such. But the Great Head of the Church knows how to connect their work on earth with that in heaven, and so order events that in their influence they still live a life on earth.

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## SERMON XXXI.

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### SHORT CONFERENCE MEETING SERMON.

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#### THE CRISIS OF PRAYER.

"O Lord! how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?"—HAB. 1: 2.

In the winter of 1829-1830, during one of the first "protracted meetings" that was held in the country, and which preceded a powerful revival of religion, there came in the town of —— a moment of awful suspense. The children had seemed to come to the birth, and there was not strength to bring forth. Meetings of high interest had been held for several days. A powerful sermon upon the parable of the prodigal son had been preached on the Saturday evening previous, when it was supposed that some fifty or more had listened for the first time to the message of eternal mercy. But nearly four days had now elapsed since the commencement of the meeting, and the apprehension began to be felt that the words of the prophet might be descriptive of our state: "O Lord! how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" It was the opinion of the brethren that we must unite special prayer with another effort,



throwing the whole responsibility upon the Lord, and applying to him to vindicate his own honor, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. There was a silent agreement to do so, and the inquiry was made, "Who shall address us?" We had come together without much concert, to pray and preach the Gospel, for several days, as was not unusual at that time; leaving it with God to direct all the movements from day to day. The preacher being selected, he rose and offered to preach if the brethren would not leave him to stand alone, but would be much in prayer; after which he named the text above mentioned: "O Lord! how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?"

The question to be answered is this: How long will God suffer his people to pray, and still neglect to hear?

I answer—

I. Till they see the plague of their own hearts—till each one sees his own individual iniquities, and lies in the dust before God. Each must learn what there is that stands between God and his own soul, and shuts out his prayers, and when he thus lies between the porch and the altar, and supplicates "with strong crying and tears," God will lift him up, and speak kindly to him, and allow him to come boldly to his throne, that he "may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

II. God will let his people cry, and will not hear till the Church feels that she stands in the gap between God and a sin-destroyed world, and that he will be inquired of to do all that he has promised, to give unto the sons of men "a new heart and a right spirit." Christians must feel that they have special audience at the throne of grace; that to them the scepter of mercy is ever extended, and that God will put honor upon their prayers.

III. God will let his people cry, and will not hear till they are willing to do whatever of duty he requires, in addition to praying. If God would have them spend much of their time in arousing their brethren to duty, in passing from house to house and pressing home the truth upon the conscience and the heart, "in season and out of season," they must do all this, or they can not hope for a revival, and this may be a field where the Christian must labor as hard as the men of the world.

IV. God will let his people cry and not hear them till they move the stumbling-blocks out of the way of a revival of his work. It may be that some of the professed people of God "drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils;" it may be that they are sleeping in seed-time, and must "beg in harvest and have nothing." They may not hear the sound of their Master's feet at the door, nor heed at all the midnight cry. When the savages of our Western wilds were wont to meet for feasting and carousal, they used to appoint a sentinel, who should watch them when overcome with sleep, and give timely notice of the approach of any foe. If Christians were

thus watchful, how often would it save them from being ensnared and taken?

V. Finally, God will let his people cry and not hear if he sees in them any disposition to withhold from him the glory of the work he does. The glory due to himself he will not even share with another. If he must make "his people willing in the day of his power," he will have all the praise. "His glory he will not give to another." The work of grace in the human soul must be begun, continued, and ended by Divine power. The sinner lies inactive and inoperative till he is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" and becomes a new creature in him. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

#### REMARKS.

1. We see from this subject why so many prayers seem to be offered in vain.

2. We see some of the causes of spiritual declension in the Church.

3. This subject shows us how we should set about raising the Church from her low estate.

4. We see the duty of every Christian to search well his own heart. Such hindrances to a revival are the sins of individuals. Each Christian, therefore, must search and purify himself.

5. Lastly, since the Church is by Divine appointment the medium of communicating spiritual blessings to a perishing world, how fearful is her responsibility: and how great should be her watchfulness, lest by her apathy, her selfishness, or her unbelief, she hinder the work of the Lord.

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## SERMON XXXII.

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### THE GUILT AND DANGER OF REFUSING TO SERVE GOD.

"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God."—HOSEA 5 : 4.

WHAT Hosea here charged upon Israel, upwards of seven hundred years before Christ, is true of every generation of unconverted men. They will not act on the principle that the great business of life is to serve and please God, and enjoy his favor here and hereafter; but on the contrary, they live for self-gratification, regardless of the will of God, and indifferent to his favor or frown.

1. *They will not treasure up that truth which is the only medium of sanctification.* The Bible, the grand treasury of Divine truth, is neglected by them. It is the last book they will open. They are averse to its truth, they spurn its precepts and commands, they

will not come "to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd;" and having known something of God, they will not retain him in their knowledge, because the knowledge of him quickens their consciences, and troubles them in their way of iniquity.

2. *They will store up folly till there is no room in their minds for divine and sanctifying truth.* This is true of both the educated and the uneducated. The latter fill their minds with foolish stories, ludicrous anecdotes, silly and obscene jests, tales of romance, etc., while the former add to these the idle speculations of infidelity and false philosophy, until divine truth finds not a nook or corner in which to take up its residence.

3. *Men so associate themselves together that it would rupture all their friendships to become the friends of God.* They often band together for the very purpose of strengthening each other's hands in sin. If they turn to God, such bands of course must be broken. And if this be not their avowed object, still the companions they choose are very often those who hate religion and its duties, and whose society and friendship must be lost to those who enter on the course which they hate.

4. *Men so commit themselves against religion, the Bible, the Sabbath, the people of God, etc., etc., as to cause them great embarrassment when there shall be occasion to take back these commitments.* They are free to express all their bitterness against the service of God, and it causes them shame to have to retract. They find it bears hard on their pride to be under the necessity of acknowledging their errors.

5. *Men so locate themselves and enter such employments as to require a change, and perhaps a rupture of all their earthly relationships, should they turn to serve and please the Lord.* They enter into business of such kind, and with such partners, that they must give up the one and separate from the other if they would become consistent, conscientious Christians. They engage in business that serves to corrupt the morals of the community, or which, as it is carried on, obliges them to break the Sabbath, or otherwise violate the law of God. Thus they throw another barrier across the way to heaven.

6. *They pollute their consciences with those acts of moral defilement which will greatly pain them, should they become the children of God.* Thus they lay foundation for future grief and fears, so as often to embitter even their best and purest hours. Witness the cases of Col. Gardiner, John Newton, and others.

7. *They advance such sentiments with regard to divine things before the ungodly, that should they change their course they will be thereby much hindered in their efforts to do good.* They call piety hypocrisy, and thus make themselves subject to the same charge, if they should profess to have become pious. Or they call it a species of misanthropy, or a profession embraced from sinister motives, and thus render their own profession liable to suspicion.

8. *All their habits of thinking, speaking, and acting, are at variance with the habits of godliness, and thus they render necessary a total*

change in their character and conversation if they embrace the Gospel.

9. *They put off religion until all their preparation for eternity is crowded into the few last moments of life.* Thus they render it impossible that they should have time to form a heavenly character, and become prepared for the employments and the pleasures of heaven. They rush headlong in sin all their days, with the vain hope of recovering themselves with one effort when they shall be laid on the bed of death. They act as though heaven was to be obtained so easily that they have but to speak the word and they are there; but how many full of such hopes, have at last found the gate of heaven barred to them forever.

#### REMARKS.

1. What a calamity it is, that men will not use a little of their wisdom in the matters of eternity, and not be continually blocking up their way to heaven. They are wise in the trifling concerns of time and sense, but in the all-important matters of eternity they are fools. Those affairs which are of the most solemn, yea, of infinite moment, they lay aside to give place to the vanities of this mortal life.

2. The people of God have great cause for gratitude that he has not suffered them to go on to a returnless distance from him. The course of the sinner is ever away from God. There is a line in the way of rebellion beyond which if he pass, there is no return; and we can not doubt that all would pass this line and be forever lost, did not the merciful hand of God stop them in their course. Christian! nothing but God's restraining grace kept you back and caused you to turn again unto him.

3. Every benevolent man will be doing all in his power to hold back his fellow-men from ruin. Benevolence is the fundamental principle of Christianity. Every Christian, therefore, will find his chief employ in saving souls from destruction, and to do this will use all the means that God has placed within his reach. He will not spare labor, nor expense, nor self-denial. If he be a true Christian, his benevolence will lead him to prefer the salvation of his fellow-men far above self-gratification.

4. Finally, it would be wise if men would calculate to be saved, and be shaping their ways for heaven. Wise, did I say? yea, it would be the perfection of wisdom. Not to be doing this is the height of folly—it is madness. This life is given us as a time in which to prepare ourselves for our final award. How foolish, how mad then is he, who squanders his days in trifling pursuits, thus neglecting all preparation for heaven, and making daily preparation for an eternity of woe.

NOTE.—SERMON XXVI. (See Page 274.) By the Rev. JOHN CROWELL, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Orange, New-Jersey, omitted in its proper place.